



# Arkansas Department of Health

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Governor Asa Hutchinson  
Nathaniel Smith, MD, MPH, Secretary of Health

April 3, 2020

In light of on-going COVID-19 concerns and Governor Hutchinson's recent State of Emergency Declaration, the Arkansas Department of Health and the Arkansas Board of Examiners in Speech Pathology and Audiology (ABESPA) recommends **voluntary suspension of all in-person non-emergency or non-urgent care or services to patients until further notice**. This recommendation is subject to change at the discretion of the Governor and Secretary of Health.

Recommended guidelines suggest postponing treatment for high-risk patients who meet any of the following criteria:

- Recently returned from an area in the U.S. with widespread COVID-19 infection or traveled internationally within the last 14 days;
- Clients, patients, and visitors who have a temperature of 100.4° F or greater, cough, or other symptoms of COVID-19;
- Aged 65 and older;
- Have compromised immune systems and/or present with chronic disease (ASA 2 and above)

For those patients who do meet criteria as emergent or urgent, universal precautions are to be strictly followed in order to minimize the possibility of disease transmission, as it is not always possible to easily identify a sick person. Here are several suggestions:

- Remove magazines and children's toys from your waiting room areas to help prevent the spread of the virus.
- Provide a single sign-in sheet per patient and/or sanitize digital screens and/or stylus after each patient.
- Make sure your office is sanitized more frequently and that exam tables, rooms, etc., are being sanitized after each patient following manufacturer instructions.
- Instruct your patients and staff to practice social distancing in the waiting room, have some patients wait in their cars, and/or work out some other alternative waiting room procedure.

Recommended strategies for employers to use now, for any infectious disease

- Actively encourage sick employees to stay home
- Separate sick employees
- Emphasize staying home when sick, respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene by all employees
- Perform routine environmental cleaning following the manufacturer's instructions.
- Advise employees before traveling to take certain steps

Collective actions taken by the community can help deter the proliferation of the COVID-19 virus in Arkansas. By rescheduling high-risk patients, professionals can do our part to prevent community spread, as well as help to preserve the limited supply of personal protective equipment that is critical for frontline healthcare personnel responding to this pandemic.

**For the most up-to-date information and support, visit our website:** [www.healthy.arkansas.gov](http://www.healthy.arkansas.gov)

**For the most up-to-date information and guidance on COVID-19 in Arkansas, visit:**  
<https://www.healthy.arkansas.gov/programs-services/topics/novel-coronavirus>

For questions regarding this guidance, please call 1-844-930-3023.